

A SHORT 6

A C C O U N T

OF THE

AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE.

By ROBERT NORRIS.

A NEW EDITION CORRECTED.

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(Illustrated by a NEW MAP of the SLAVE COAST,
comprehended between the River Volta and Benin,
with Cape Lagos.)

MEMOIRS of the REIGN of BOSSA
AHADEE, KING OF DAHOMY,
an Inland Country of Guinea; to which are
added, the Author's Tour to ABOMEY, the
Capital; and a Short Account of the African
Slave Trade.

By ROBERT NORRIS.

A SHORT
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AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE.

AS the African Slave-Trade has been of late the subject of public examination and of private discussion, a brief account of it may not perhaps be unacceptable to those who have had no opportunity of hearing the evidence that has been given at the bar of both houses of parliament, or leisure to peruse the various publications which the present inquiry has occasioned.

A trade for Negro slaves is carried on from the river Senegal in 16 deg. north latitude,

to Cape Negro, in 16 deg. south: which comprehends a tract of near four thousand miles of sea coast; and includes the greatest part of the interior country, within the above limits, from the confines of Mount Atlas, across the immense continent of Africa, to Mozambique, on the eastern coast.

From the nations bordering on the rivers Senegal and Gambia, the emperor of Morocco procures annually recruits for his black cavalry; and his subjects are furnished from thence with whatever slaves they have occasion for. Caravans also travel from thence across the continent, to Upper Egypt, with considerable numbers of Negro slaves; who are forwarded from thence either from Alexandria, by sea, or marched through Asia Minor, to Constantinople. From the same country, including the districts towards the river Sierra Leon, slaves are collected for supplying the different states of Barbary; from the ports of which, some of these slaves are sent to the Morea, and to the Turkish islands in the Mediterranean: hence it is, that the African coast from Senegal to Sierra Leon affords, comparatively, but few slaves

to

to the European traders. From Mozambique, and the ports on the eastern coast of Africa, great numbers are sent to Persia, Goa, and other parts of the East Indies; and in proportion as the culture of the West Indian Islands, and of the European settlements in America, has been extended, a demand for the labour of African Negroes has regularly increased there; and now amounts to about eighty thousand annually: of which the British purchase about forty thousand; the French, twenty thousand; the Portuguese, ten thousand; the Dutch, six thousand; and the Danes, four thousand.—Of the forty thousand purchased by the British, about a twentieth part are calculated to die on the voyage; and three-fourths of those that arrive in the West Indies, are disposed of to the French and Spaniards; the remainder are distributed in the British islands, the greater part of which continues still in a state of nature. Jamaica will require an addition of five or six thousand slaves annually, for many years, to complete its cultivation. This is the case also, though in a less degree, of the islands of Grenada, Dominica, St. Vincent,

and some other places ; particularly the Bahamas and the Bay of Honduras : the Bahamas are now the retreat of the unfortunate Loyalists, who having been banished from the United States, have a virgin soil to work upon, which promises no ungrateful return, as soon as the necessary labourers can be procured ; and the Bay of Honduras affords an asylum to those British settlers, who have lately been obliged to abandon their possessions on the Mosquitto shore.

When the prodigious demand for African Negroes, which has existed for time immemorial in Mauritania, Egypt, Persia, and the East, is considered ; and in addition to that the immense exportation of late years to America and the West Indies, it might be presumed, that a visible decrease of inhabitants would be the consequence of these annual drains ; but from the concurrent testimony of the most intelligent persons, who have visited that country, it does not appear that this speculation is justified by experience.

They who have been both in Africa and America, say that they have been struck
with

with the appearance of nearly the same population as in the state of Virginia, in those parts of Africa that lie upon the Coast; and add, that from the best information which they could get, the interior parts are at least as fully inhabited, as those which they had an opportunity of seeing. Virginia comprehends about thirty thousand square miles, and, including the Negroes, is said to contain eight hundred thousand inhabitants: taking this for the basis of a calculation, it may reasonably be presumed that Negroland, which extends, as was mentioned before, from the Senegal to Cape Negro, and from the Atlantic eastward to the Indian Ocean, and contains, exclusive of Nubia and Abissinia, at least, four millions of square miles, cannot have less than one hundred and six millions of inhabitants; which are more than Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Holland and Switzerland collectively contain.

A late writer*, who was well acquainted with Africa, from his long residence there,

* The late Governor Hippisly, of Cape Coast Castle; whose account may be had from the publisher of this work.

has pointed out the very different circumstances of Europe and Africa, with regard to the advantages and disadvantages attending the propagation of the species in each. What numbers of both sexes, says he, are there in the European world, who grow up and die without ever having children! The increase of luxury has always been an enemy to matrimony; and accordingly, we find many decline it from choice, and many from necessity. The vain are deterred from it, from an unwillingness to abridge any part of the splendor of their appearance; and the indigent, from a certainty of multiplying their necessities. The long absence of men from their wives, on account of trade and other avocations, to say nothing of war and its wasteful consequences, necessarily reduces the number of births. A state of servitude precludes a state of matrimony, in a great part of the community; for there are few who will keep a married servant of either sex; but above all, religion, in the Roman Catholic countries, strikes the heaviest blow at propagation. These, and other obstacles to marriage and population, which exist, and
are

are likely to continue in Europe, prevent a yearly recruit of at least some millions of people; yet under all these disadvantages, the number of its inhabitants are supposed to increase.

In Africa none of these impediments prevail: there we find desire, unchecked by the dread of want, taking its full scope. A turn to speculation, retirement and abstracted studies, resolutions of celibacy from disappointed love, unmarried servants, long voyages, and religious vows, are utterly unknown. Their wars are not attended with the same circumstances of destruction as ours*; and here are no impediments against pursuing the dictates of natural inclination. Polygamy is universally practised in Africa, and contributes greatly to its populousness. It would be hurtful to the population of Europe; where the number of males and females born is nearly equal; or at least differs only about as much as to make up for the number of the former that are cut off, by accidents attending their active state: but in Africa,

* Long voyages, tedious imprisonments, shipwrecks, bombardments, &c. &c.

where

where no man goes without a wife from a scarcity of women, and in short an unmarried black man is seldom or never seen; where the richest men, having many wives, do not prevent the poorest from having one or two, the number of women must greatly exceed that of the men: nor is this a singular case, for the same happens at Bantam, and other parts of the East Indies, that lie in the same latitude: besides the number of men every year slaughtered and sacrificed in Africa, there is a great majority of male slaves carried out of it, which still adds very much to the relative proportion of women left behind; so that there must be an advantage to population in admitting polygamy in a country, where almost every man may have two or three wives, and several, as many hundreds. Hence it is, that Africa can not only continue supplying all the demands that offer for her surplus inhabitants, in the quantities it has hitherto done, but, if necessity required it, could spare thousands, nay millions more, to the end of time; all of whom may be considered as rescued by

by this means from that certain death, which awaited them in their own country.

The vast country of Negroland is divided into a multitude of states, the greatest part of which have never yet been explored; but in those which have been visited by Europeans, the government is found to vary from the most absolute tyranny in some, to somewhat less despotic and oppressive in others. The bulk of the people are slaves to a few freemen; and in some states there is not an individual free but the prince: from every circumstance of intelligence and observation, the general state of the Negro, in Africa, is that of slavery and oppression, in every sense of the word. In *Dabomy*, the king is absolute master of the life, liberty, and property, of every person in his dominions; and he sports with them, with the most savage and wanton cruelty. Piles of their heads are placed as ornaments before his palace gates on festival days, and on every public occasion; and the floors leading to his apartment are strewed with their bodies, to impress those who approach him with respect and awe. The area before his bed-chamber,

chamber, is paved with the skulls of prisoners taken in war, that he may daily enjoy the savage gratification of literally trampling on the heads of his enemies. Parents have neither property, nor interest in their children, in the *Dahoman* territories; they belong entirely to the king, and are all taken, by his order, from their mothers, at an early age, and distributed in villages remote from the place of their nativity; where there is but little chance of their being seen, or, at least, recognized by their parents afterwards. His motive for this is, that there may be no family connexions, no associations that might be injurious to his unlimited power. Each individual is detached, and unconnected; and, having no relative for whom he is interested, is solicitous only for his own safety, which he consults by the most abject submission. There, paternal affections, and filial love scarcely exist: for mothers, instead of cherishing, endeavour to suppress those attachments for their offspring, which, they are certain, will be violated, as soon as their children are able to undergo the fatigue of being removed from

from them. Yet, this worst of slavery does not prevent population, as it, doubtless, would in any civilized part of the world, where liberty is prized above all other enjoyments. But the idea of slavery is different in an African. Had the Negro the love of rational freedom existing in his breast, it is next to impossible that he could act thus. But, alas! he knows nothing of this inestimable blessing, having never enjoyed it! The country which gave him birth, the soil from which he sprung, produce no such blossom; and, should it ever appear, which is highly improbable, instead of the fostering hand to bring it to maturity, the bloody and unrelenting arm of tyranny is ever ready to cut it down.

The credibility of these extraordinary facts does not depend upon mere hearsay: *Dahomy* is a maritime kingdom, in which the British, French, and Portuguese have been permitted to erect forts for the protection of their trade; and the veracity of what is here related, is authenticated by the indubitable testimony of many who have resided there, and have avowed it publicly.

The

The Africans have been in the practice, from time immemorial, of selling their countrymen, and never entertained any more doubt of their right to do so, than we do of sending delinquents to Botany Bay or to Tyburn; deeming it fair and just to dispose of their slaves, prisoners of war, and felons, according to their own established laws and customs. Great enormities they punish with death; but, unless it be in such despotic governments as *Dahomy*, few but criminals are sold to the Europeans, except prisoners taken in war; who would inevitably be put to death, did not a more profitable mode offer of disposing of them: and hence it is, that persons of some rank in their own country, sometimes become slaves in the West Indies and American colonies; but the house of bondage, strictly speaking, may be called a land of freedom to them: where, notwithstanding they do not enjoy pre-eminence, they may be comfortable; and where, although prevented from exercising cruelty on others, they are always protected themselves. Those who are guilty of theft, adultery, or the imputed crime of witchcraft,
if

if they escape death, are sold for slaves. To deter them from the commission of these crimes, their situation in foreign slavery is represented to be attended with the severest tortures; which, fortunately for them however, are not realized. Nor is it to be wondered at, in a country of so great extent, and so little civilization, that the greatest part of the Africans, brought to the European colonies, have been previously condemned to slavery, for acts of delinquency; since Great Britain alone, under the superior advantages of its religion, laws, and manners, produces annually above two thousand convicts.

Since the labour of African slaves has been found necessary for the cultivation of the soil in the tropical climates of America, from the utter incapacity of white people to undergo that fatigue, every European nation possessing colonies there, has been solicitous to acquire a share in this traffic; nor have the most scrupulous of them entertained a doubt of their right to purchase, what the Africans exercised a right to dispose of.

Among the adventurers in this trade, the
British

British possess, at present, the greatest share. It was during the government of the Commonwealth, that Negroes were carried, in any numbers, to the British West Indies, and then, chiefly to Barbadoes: a few indeed were brought to Virginia, by a Dutch ship, as early as 1620; but it was the Royal African Company that first carried on, from England, a vigorous commerce to Africa, during the reign of Charles II. We may form an opinion of the magnitude of it, in its most flourishing state, prior to the Revolution in 1688, by considering that the company employed thirty ships annually, which delivered about five thousand Negroes in the West Indies. The increase of it to its present state, may be attributed to the enterprising spirit of the merchants; to the superior address of those employed in the executive part of it; to the opulence of the manufacturers, which enables them to extend a credit to the former, beyond what can be had in any other country; and to the annual grants of parliament, for the maintenance of several forts and factories in Africa. From these concurring circumstances, the British
planters

planters are supplied with Negroes, on more reasonable terms than their neighbours; and a large surplus is left, which is disposed of to the French and Spaniards for specie, and other valuable commodities.

The importance of this trade to Great Britain may be determined from the following considerations: it immediately employs one hundred and eighty ships, about one hundred and forty of which sail annually for Africa, with cargoes which amount nearly to a million sterling, and which are composed of the productions of the British settlements in the East and West Indies; and of British manufactures, to the value of seven hundred thousand pounds. The circuitous returns of these cargoes are computed at a million and a half. The artificers and mechanics employed at Liverpool alone, receive one hundred thousand pounds annually for labor and materials employed in equipping the ships engaged in it; and exclusive of the large sums paid for seamen's wages, the commissions and privilege of the captains and officers amount at least to fifty thousand pounds annually: which are gene-

rally realized here, and have contributed greatly to the rapid increase of that commercial town.

The African trade, connected as it is with the West Indian commerce, and with the trade to the remaining continental colonies, and Newfoundland fishery, is of the utmost consequence to the employment of many thousands of our fellow subjects; to the naval power of Britain; and to the royal revenues; all which are conjoined by sympathetic ties. The value of three millions at least of domestic manufactures, exclusive of other merchandize, annually finds a profitable vent by means of the African and West Indian trades; and above five millions of property, arising from the labor of Negro slaves, employed in the West Indian islands, is yearly imported from thence; which contributes not less than a million and an half annually to the revenue of this kingdom.* To carry on this immense traffic,

* As this estimate of the importance of the West Indian and African trades was made from memory, without any documents at hand to refer to, it may be satisfactory to the reader

fic, and to supply these islands with lumber and provisions from the continental colonies and Newfoundland fishery, gives constant employment to at least a thousand ships,

reader to see it compared with the statements in the public accounts, which were laid before the House of Commons in the last session of parliament: with this view, the following extracts from the public accounts are annexed.

Exports to the Sugar Colonies from

Christmas 1786 to Christmas 1787.	£1,612,009	5	10
Exports to Africa in the same period.	679,617	6	0
	<hr/>		
	£2,291,626	11	10

N. B. It should be observed, that the custom-house value of the goods exported is only three-fourths of their real value; which brings the amount of the exports nearly to the sum quoted in the text.

To enter into a detail of the several articles, would exceed my limits; I shall therefore only remark a few of the principal ones that were sent to the West Indies: of these the amount was as follows:

British linens.....	£508,618	8	4
Ditto Woollens.....	98,581	11	9
Iron Ware.....	167,497	16	10
Copper Ware.....	44,291	13	0
Fifty thousand barrels of British herrings, caught on our own shores by British fishermen.....	£55,991	2	9

ships, and to above twenty thousand mariners. To enumerate the fatal consequences that would inevitably ensue from a check given to this extensive commerce, much more

Imports from the Sugar Colonies from Christmas 1786 to Christmas 1787 :

Sugar, 1,926,741 cwt. valued at 5d. per

lb.....	£4,495,729	0	0
Rum, 2,253,657 gallons, at 6s. per gal.	676,097	2	0
Coffee, 1,126,073 lb. at 8os. per cwt...	40,216	17	0
Cocoa, 281,111 lb. at 5os. per cwt.....	6,272	10	0
	<hr/>		
	£5,218,315	9	0

N. B. No accounts were delivered of the amount of the following articles, viz. cotton, ginger, pimento, dying woods, aloes and other drugs, mahogany, fustic, lignum vitæ, and other woods; but they are calculated as follows, viz.

Cotton, 40,000 bags, at 25l. each ..	£1,000,000	0	0
Ginger, 4000 bags, at 2l. each	8,000	0	0
Pimento, 12,000 ditto, at 5l. each..	60,000	0	0
Woods, valued at.....	25,000	0	0
	<hr/>		
	1,093,000	0	0
Amount of imports, as above,	5,218,315	9	0
	<hr/>		
	£6,311,315	9	0

N. B. It is supposed the cottons imported amount to eighty thousand bags of 240lb. each; but as part are the growth of foreign islands, they are stated at only half the quantity.

Imports

more the suppression of it, exceeds the present limits of this short sketch, but they shall be hinted in the sequel.

Imports from Africa from Christmas 1786 to Christmas 1787, such as ivory, gold dust, &c. as stated in the public accounts.....£ 106,245 19 3

Value of 38,000 Negroes, imported into the West Indies, &c. at 40l. sterling each..... 1,520,000 0 0

£1,626,245 19 3

R E V E N U E.

Customs.—Sugar.....£1,187,814 12 2

Drawback..... 122,957 1 9

Nett £1,064,857 10 5

Rum..... £46,943 10 0

Drawback on 864,313 gallons exported 17,899 4 2

Nett £29,044 5 10

Excise on 1,389,344 gallons of rum consumed, at 3s. 7d. per gallon.... £248,924 1 0

Coffee from 10th May to Christmas 1787..... 69,087 9 11

Cocoa from ditto..... 10,916 2 0

328,927 12 11

Customs on Sugar, as above.... 1,064,857 10 5

Ditto on Rum..... 29,044 5 10

Total £1,422,829 9 2

The adventurers in this trade, who have seen for near a century past, the Society for propagating Christianity, composed of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and many pious doctors of the established church, deriving, as masters, a yearly income from the labor of their Negroe slaves in the West Indies, which is appropriated to the increase of Christianity in the world, could not consider it as contrary to the spirit of the Scriptures, or to the principles of morality: nor could the adventurers regard this traffic as inconsistent with the natural rights of mankind, when they read in the statute of 9 and 10 of King William (which was made avowedly for extending the trade to Africa), "*That this trade was highly beneficial to this kingdom;*" a declaration of a king, who was the patron of liberty, and of a parliament that had vindicated the natural rights of mankind; and when they read also in the stat. of 23 Geo. II. "*That the trade to Africa is very advantageous to Great Britain, and necessary to the plantations.*" Which act was made by a whig king, and a whig parliament; who, when they

they dissolved the late African Company, granted a large sum of money as a compensation for their rights, in order that a trade thus necessary and advantageous, might be carried on with greater energy and success.

Encouraged by these, and various other acts of parliament, which declared the African trade to be highly beneficial to this nation, many merchants engaged their fortunes in it; nor could they imagine the *purchase* of Negroes from those states of Africa (who have the same right to dispose of them as the parliament has to inflict the pains of banishment or death) or consider the *sale* of them as illegal, when they knew that many able lawyers, learned judges, and illustrious chancellors had expressly declared this purchase and sale to be lawful; and to have transferred to the master such a property as could not be affected by local changes, or subsequent baptism: and when the adventurers know also, that in conformity to the declarations of these judges and lawyers, the statute of the 5th of his late and of the 13th of his present Majesty, subjected the Negroes in the West Indian islands, as well as

the lands which they labored, to the payment of all debts, owing either to his Majesty, or to any of his subjects; and directed these Negroes to be sold, like any other chattels, for satisfaction of such debts. In consequence of which, the five hundred thousand Negroes, now belonging to the planters in those islands, are pledged by the legislature, and by the nation, for payment of the debts that are due, either to the British merchants or manufacturers, or to the subjects of foreign princes; who, by a late act of parliament, have been encouraged and enabled to lend money to these planters, on the security of their lands, and of the labor of their Negroes.

Yet this trade, so highly beneficial to the adventurers, and important to the state; a trade sanctioned by the clergy, supported by the judges, and authorized by the laws, has lately been condemned both in principle and practice. By the law and usage of parliament, the most trivial right of the most inconsiderable subject is never taken away, even for the public good itself, without a manifest necessity, and a full compensation.

Yet

Yet an attempt has been made, and measures are unremittingly pursued, to deprive the British planters, merchants and manufacturers, of the advantage of this important traffic; and under a pretence of regulation, restrictions have already been imposed, which strike at its existence: but though the liberty of Negroes seems now to be the favorite idea, the liberty of Britons to pursue their lawful occupations should not be forgotten: for the principle which has raised the commerce and navigation of this country, and with them the landed interest and revenues of the kingdom, from inconsiderable beginnings to their present greatness, is the *right* which every man in it possesses, to carry on his own business, in the way most advantageous to himself and the society, without any sudden interruption in the pursuit of it; and the *consciousness* which he has, of the steady protection of the laws, in the prosecution of what has been shewn to be legal.

At a time when neighbouring nations, our rivals in commerce as well as arms, are lavishing unprecedented bounties, to extend
their

their African trade, and endeavor to promote it by every possible encouragement, an association has been formed here for the avowed purpose of *abolishing* it; who suffering themselves to be imposed upon, by lending too credulous an ear to that kind of information which they sought with more avidity than justice, without duly considering by what means, or by or from whom it was procured, have labored to inflame the passions, and prejudice the minds of the community, by various publications, containing the most gross mistatements of facts, and misrepresentation of characters. It is an easy task to draw in glowing colors, that imaginary picture of human woe, which shall excite compassion, and rouse indignation; and in this style of painting the solicitors for the abolition have almost succeeded to their wishes: by their personal assiduities, subscriptions, and publications; by their circular letters to the mayors of corporations, and addresses to grand juries, they have raised the torch of civil contest in the realm, which may eventually spread the flame of resistance throughout the colonies. Their clamors

have

have reached the legislature; and they who are concerned in the trade, have been called upon to defend their rights and injured reputation, at the bar of both houses of parliament.

It has there appeared in evidence, that to *serve a particular purpose*, the mortality of the mariners, and of the Negroes, had been exaggerated beyond the bounds of probability and truth: that the African trade, so far from being destructive to the lives of British seamen, in the degree asserted, is, in fact a nursery for training up men to that useful profession.* That this trade is carried on as much to the ease and comfort of those that are the subjects of it, and also of those who conduct it, as it is possible for human ingenuity to devise. That the ships employed in it, are so peculiarly constructed for the ac-

* For it is in this trade alone that those who are desirous of embracing a sea life, at an age too advanced to commence an apprenticeship, can find employment; as the crews of vessels in any other trade, consist of seamen and apprentices only: but in this, one half at least of each ship's company is composed of landsmen, young men, who in two or three voyages acquire as much professional knowledge as qualifies them afterwards for any station of a sea life.

commodation

commodation of the Negroes, as to be unsuitable for any other trade. That the opinion, which has been industriously propagated, of these ships being unequal to the numbers which were said to be crowded in them, is groundless; as appears from a survey and admeasurement of them, by an experienced naval officer appointed by government.* That on the voyage from Africa to the West Indies, the Negroes are well fed, comfortably lodged, and have every possible attention paid to their health, cleanliness, and convenience. That the captain's cabin is appropriated to the use of such as are sick: where proper care, and medical aid, are duly administered to them; and that, by an admirable regulation, the emoluments of the captains and officers, employed in this trade, are connected with, and depend upon, the health and good condition of those whom they have the charge of conveying. The mode of ob-

* In every instance of those ships which delivered their cargoes at the British West India islands, it appears that (to evade a duty upon tonnage which is paid there) their tonnage was reported to the custom houses, at one third or more below their real burthen.

aining Negro slaves in Africa, has been demonstrated to be in a way perfectly fair, and equitable; by a barter with the natives. The crime of *kidnapping*, as it is termed, with which the traders to Africa have been reproached, proves to be extremely unfrequent: for the African committee, whose business it is to take cognizance of such an offence, and for which the law inflicts a heavy penalty, have reported, that only *one instance* of it has come before them in the course of near *forty years*. It has also been shewn, that, in consequence of this trade, many innocent lives are spared, that would otherwise be sacrificed to the superstitious rites and ceremonies of the country; many prisoners of war exempted from torture, and death: and the punishment of many crimes commuted from death in Africa to life in America: and finally, that it is the lot of most of those that are brought to the Colonies, who, generally speaking, were slaves in their own country, only to exchange a black master for a white one.

That the wars which have always existed in Africa, have no connection with the slave-trade, is evident from the universality of the practice

practice of it between communities in a savage state. The oldest writers, as *Leo*, and others, have represented the Africans as living in a continual state of war and rapine, long before the commerce with Europeans was introduced among them; and no man of sense can doubt but the same practice would still continue, if no trade existed, and with greater frequency. Besides the motives of ambition and resentment, which the African has, in common with other nations of men, the turbulent and irascible disposition of a Negro prompts him to harass and dispute with his neighbour, upon the most trivial provocations. Lured by the love of plunder, before he ever saw an European commodity (as the value of an article depends upon the estimation it holds in the fancy of him who covets it), the rude productions of the country, the trinkets of gold, or ivory, &c. were as much the objects of his desire formerly, as the acquisition of European manufactures can be at present. So far are the Whites from being necessary to these wars, as has been unjustly alleged; it is notorious, that the Europeans trading there, deprecate a war as the greatest inconvenience

inconvenience that can happen to them : trade is entirely suspended during its continuance ; and the term of their voyages is thereby protracted much beyond the usual time. Hence arises an inevitable increase of expence, and an additional risk of sickness and mortality, which cannot be compensated by a few additional slaves, that may occasionally be brought to market in consequence of it. The assertion, that farther supplies of slaves from Africa, are not necessary to the cultivation of our islands, scarcely merits a serious refutation. It is dictated by the same mistaken policy, that preferred the wilds of Canada, at the close of a former war, to the possession of the truly valuable Sugar Islands ; which, after being wrested from our enemies and rivals, at the expence of much blood and treasure, were again restored to them in an evil hour. But are no new settlements to be made, nor old ones to be extended ? Is industry to be limited, and improvement prohibited, in the most valuable of all our foreign possessions ; where a supply from propagation alone, adequate to the services required, is never to be expected. And are princely territories,

ritories, millions of property, to be hazarded upon crude experiments? of whose success some few may possibly hope; but of whose failure few indeed can have a doubt?

How the Negroes, occupied in the Colonies, are now treated, remains next to be considered; and cannot be better related than nearly in the words of a respectable writer*, who has very lately favored the public with his observations on this subject.

Negro property is an object of such value and importance to the proprietor, that he is disposed to cherish it by every prudent and humane method: independent of what he owes as a man, and a Christian, he feels an adventitious affection for it, resulting from interest. Hence it is, that the happiness and misery of Negroes, in the West Indies, depend almost totally on themselves. If a Negro is slothful or flagitious, he is, like rascals and drones of society in every well regulated community, poor and miserable; and subject to correction, as a punishment for his own vices, and for the instruction of others: but, on the contrary, if he is in-

* Hector M'Neil, Esq. of Jamaica.

dustrious in his own concerns, and attentive to the interest of his superior, mild in temper, and tractable in disposition, he is entitled to indulgencies, which thousands, even in this country, would be happy to enjoy.—The habitations of the slaves, on every estate, are situated near the dwelling-house of the owner, or overseer; that they may be under more immediate inspection. These are, in general, comfortable and commodious; with a garden to each, encircled with plantain, banana, and orange trees; and stocked with roots and vegetables, for domestic uses; and even a large surplus to spare, which is carried occasionally to market, to exchange for those little necessaries and luxuries, which they wish to enjoy. Besides this, there is a portion of land on every estate, called the *Negro-grounds*, of which each slave is allowed as much as he can cultivate, for his own use. This land, from the fertility of the soil, requires only a small portion of occasional labor; a few hours in a week is sufficient, and the Negro is allowed, independent of every Sunday, which he has to himself throughout the year, one day in a fortnight,

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for

for * eight months of it, for cultivating his grounds. In these habitations, there is an arrangement of apartments, and propriety of furniture; a supply of utensils; and even a parade of apparel, little to be expected in the possession of slaves. They have each their styes of hogs, and little flocks of poultry; some of them reserved for sale, and the rest appropriated to their evening's repast; this, with a comfortable night's rest, enables them to return with vigor to the next morning's work, which, however strange it may seem, is not so hard as that of most of the laboring poor in Britain. But what renders the situation of the Negro peculiarly comfortable, is the provision made for him during sickness, and old age. On the first symptoms of indisposition, he is instantly exempted from all labor, and lodged in a house particularly constructed for the purpose, where he is visited daily by a practitioner of medicine; supplied with fresh viands, vegetables, and even wine; attended constantly by a nurse, who acts likewise as an under

* Crop-time occupies the other four.

medical assistant, and is not desired, or even allowed to resume labor, until his health and strength enable him to undergo its fatigues. Let indisposition continue never so long; no immediate loss, no confusion or derangement in his little property, is the consequence. Poverty, want, and affliction, are, by no means, the concomitants of his sick-bed: every thing, through the assistance of his fellow-labourers and the direction of his superiors, goes on, and is attended to, in the same way, as if he was immediately on the spot: his grounds are worked; his stock raised; his fruits and products carried to market, by his family or connections; and as he is amply supplied with every necessary during his confinement, instead of being poorer, he comes out of his hospital a richer man than when he went in. When old age has rendered his farther exertions useless, it may be presumed, that some property has been acquired, and a situation of comfort established.—These he is allowed to enjoy unmolested, while the usual proportion of provisions and clothing are annually given to him. His children, and his

children's children, his friends and former fellow-labourers; his countrymen, and fellow passengers, are all near him, and are all ready to administer their helps and consolation. In short, instead of wretchedness, and chilling penury, old age, in this state, often wears away and snaps its slender thread as gently and perhaps as imperceptibly, as in any country whatever. It is a fact worthy of observation, that a Negro slave in the West Indies, has scarcely ever been heard to express a desire to return to his own country; nor, of the many who have obtained their freedom there, has one put it into practice: but, on the contrary, even newly imported Negroes, when threatened by the overseer, upon some fault or neglect of theirs, to be sent back again, are seriously alarmed at it.

To the eye of candor and moderation I address this picture of what does really exist. But to the prejudiced,—to those who are instigated to calumnies the most harsh, and proceedings the most unjust, upon the slightest grounds, I have nothing to offer, because I know that the opinions they have
hastily

hastily adopted without any justifiable evidence, they will not quite so hastily give up. No persons are or can be so well informed of the facts I have before stated, as the planters and merchants resident, or who have resided in the West Indies, and in whose view they have passed. But the *abolitionists* very artfully endeavor to put aside every testimony of this sort, by insinuating, that they are interested parties, and therefore their evidence must be destitute of credibility. It is rather hard, that the testimony of many thousands of British subjects, among whom are men of unquestioned integrity and distinguished moral character, endued with as much virtue and honor as any other class of men in the world, should be less credible than that of hireling scriblers, profligate common sailors, and the scum of the people. But be it so; and then let us appeal for the truth to other witnesses;—to the governors, and other public officers, civil, military, and naval; who holding offices under the crown, have occasionally lived in the West Indian islands, and are undoubtedly competent to declare what they have observed. Let us
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also appeal to the acts of our colonial legislature, particularly *Jamaica*; where from the year 1781 to the present, the *General Assembly* have been framing and enacting a succession of laws, all calculated to meliorate the condition of their Negroes by gradual improvements. To have done less, would ill have accorded with their known humanity; but to have done more, would have brought no credit to their wisdom; for to anticipate those more enlarged privileges and franchises, which time and maturer civilization alone must gradually effectuate, would be folly, or rather frenzy in the extreme. The unexceptionable attestations of these laws, these governors, admirals, generals, and other officers of high rank and character, we may very safely oppose to all the hearsay stories, paragraphs, essays, pamphlets and hand-bills, which the *abolitionists* can possibly scrape together, in support of their petitions to parliament.

There now only remains of the proposed plan of this short sketch, to point out briefly what would be the probable, nay, the inevitable consequence of the surrender of a trade,
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which is the connecting medium of our foreign with our domestic commerce. If it were taken out of the chain, of which it composes so considerable a link, and upon which our manufactures so immediately depend, every improvement in the West Indian islands would immediately cease, and a diminution of the produce of the lands, now under cultivation there, would shortly follow. The export of British manufactures, which to Africa and the Colonies amount to nearly three millions sterling annually would soon be reduced to nothing. The immense sums, owing to this country from the West Indies, would for ever remain unpaid; and innumerable bankruptcies would follow at home. From the inevitable decrease of the import of West Indian productions, there would be such a deficiency of the national revenue, as the imposition of fresh taxes, upon a people deprived of their accustomed resources of opulence and industry, could not possibly replace. If we should seek to replace this deficiency, by importing the products of the *Foreign* West Indian islands, —this indeed would be a truly national *felo*

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de se. A decay of public credit, and a depreciation of government securities, would ensue, from an inability to raise the public supplies. Our national importance would quickly decline, and be known to the next generation, only by the page of history. After so flagrant an act of oppression and impolicy, the merchants could no longer confide in government, for the continuation of those privileges which they had for ages enjoyed. This reflection would naturally throw a damp on all future enterprize, in every branch of foreign trade, as well as domestic manufacture; for however the minds of some men may be inflamed at this moment, and however strenuous they may be in opposition to the African slave trade, there must a time come, when every Englishman, who is capable of reflecting at all, will weigh the injustice of this proceeding, abstracted from every consideration of feeling or policy; and will then perceive the instability of all commercial establishments in a country, where the mistaken zeal of a *few* could excite the legislature, so grossly to invade the rights of individuals. These and many other evils,

evils, must be reasonably expected from the *abolition* of a trade, which we *may* relinquish ; but which *cannot* be taken from us, by the jealousy of foreign power : in this political self-murder we must be our own executioners.

To prevent these calamities, a bill is now framing, from local knowledge and practical experience ; not a bill of mere theory and speculation, such as lately appeared, but a bill to obviate every reasonable complaint, and establish every necessary regulation in the African trade : and that such a bill may meet the approbation of every branch of the British legislature, and be passed into a law, ought to be the earnest wish of every patriotic *Briton*.

F I N I S.